



## Not all roads lead to qualification...

**RUTH DEVINE,**  
**Managing Director of**  
**SJD Electrical and Chair**  
**of TESP, addresses the**  
**age-old question: what**  
**constitutes a qualified,**  
**professional electrician?**



For many years now, there has been increasing concern across the industry about 'five-week wonder' electrical courses and similar training programmes that purport to qualify individuals to an industry standard.

Numerous employers have first-hand experience of applicants turning up with certificates from courses which they may have paid thousands of pounds for, but which have no value or recognition in the industry. The individuals in question have often spent their money in the belief that they're doing the right thing, but they are usually left with limited options for employment and progression.

### Money matters

A technical apprenticeship remains the industry's preferred entry point. However, some training provider's websites perpetuate outdated information, stating that apprenticeships can't be funded for those over 19, which is completely incorrect. In England, companies can now get funding to take on an apprentice at any age.

With the financial support available, apprenticeships can also be a great option for employers to upskill more experienced workers to gain a formal qualification. Many employers will be unaware that the apprenticeship standard can be used for this purpose. Providing the employee requires a minimum of 12 months of development, with 20 percent of this being allocated for 'off the job' training such as in the classroom, supervised work, or coaching, for instance, it's worth investigating funding in this area.

In addition to adult apprenticeships, there are also routes such as the JIB Mature Candidate Assessment to qualify those with existing industry knowledge, skills and experience.

The promotional information given by training providers may well confuse many potential trainees. Websites often offer packages labelled as 'gold', 'silver' and 'bronze' which claim to transform an individual into a professional electrician. But close inspection of the smaller print often reveals that an individual also needs to be working in the industry to achieve these levels ►

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(which many applicants are not) Furthermore, the package may include a cost for onsite assessment at a future point - assessments which would have been funded if the individual was on an apprenticeship.

### Three-pronged plan

The Electrotechnical Skills Partnership (TESP) is highly aware of the issues these training programmes are causing and the detrimental affect they are having on the industry. To address this, TESP is currently working on an ‘Industry Approved’ qualifications campaign which we aim to launch later in 2019.

There are three main strands to this campaign. First, it’s important to develop improved guidance and information on routes into the industry, and which qualifications are recognised or valued, so those paying for training or enrolling on a full-time course understand what they are getting.

The new Electrical Careers website will be a focal point for this and we will also be developing a ‘TESP Industry Approved’ logo which will be used for designated qualifications.

Secondly, we will be working with the main awarding organisations to review their offer and explore the potential for rationalising qualifications and providing better information for candidates and training providers. Following initial analysis, we are already concerned about the proliferation of meaningless qualifications that contain no work-based learning and have no apparent value to the industry.

Finally, we will be engaging directly with numerous training providers, particularly those referring to ECA, ECS or JIB recognition or affiliation. The more robust process being introduced for ECA Educational Associates will also help to ensure that anyone holding Associate status complies with best practice.

### What’s next?

Broader developments might also be moving in favour of robust, competence-based qualifications. ECA and other partners have been working hard to secure improvements to the Electrotechnical Assessment Specification (EAS), which defines how certification bodies assess the electrotechnical capability of organisations.

These include proposals to close off alternative routes to ‘Qualified Supervisor’ status, other than completion of a relevant apprenticeship and/or level 3 diploma, and further reinforcement of the duty of each organisation properly to ensure individuals’ qualifications and competence.

In the current landscape increasing importance is attached to evidence that individuals are appropriately qualified and competent to do their job. The TESP Industry Approved qualifications campaign will be a further step towards achieving this goal within our industry.

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